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ABSTRACT

Issues in the management of library collections of electronically delivered information are discussed, focusing on the library at Troy State University (Alabama). Because of the library's selective depository status, expensive compact disk-read only memory (CD-ROM) products are received, which the library could not normally afford. At the Troy State library, English is the primary language, with some foreign language resources included. The library has chosen to purchase products that allow cost-effective delivery within collection criteria, rather than emphasizing replacement of paper indexes with electronic indexes just for the sake of change. The following are four major criteria in choosing electronic products: (1) majority decision of the collection management committee or approval by the Dean; (2) interdisciplinary and broad-based focus; (3) potential for full-text delivery; and (4) heavier weight given to documents with potential for delivery by the Internet. Additional criteria include ease of use, including search capacities, and reviews in professional publications. Once purchased, products are subject to on-going assessment. When a strong base of electronic products is in place, the university must work to allow for replacement of obsolete materials. (SLD)

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COLLECTION MANAGEMENT: ELECTRONICALLY-DELIVERED INFORMATION

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Introduction

A goal of electronically-delivered information is to provide cost-effective, search-effective interdisciplinary resources. In addition to the standard bibliographic tools in key disciplines, the library has knowingly chosen resources offering full-text resources and multimedia capabilities. A shift from "just in case" to "just in time" has also taken place. Libraries have tried to collect and house everything "just in case" a patron needed the material. The eighties forced libraries to work harder at sharing resources, but patrons were not always pleased with having to wait for the needed materials. It is of great benefit that libraries now can supplement in-house collections through computer-generated documents, which are delivered "just in time." This combination of basic collections of journals, books, and non-book media in-house with that of electronically-delivered materials meets curricula requirements better than ever before.

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Campus Connection

Delivery of electronic information is supportive of all schools and departments on campus in all subject areas. To reiterate what was said in the preceding paragraph, electronic delivery is timely, interdisciplinary, and can have full-text capability. Another important point is that this delivery offers portability; it has the potential of providing information outside the four walls of the library.

Formats

Within the realm of computerized resources, there are several possible formats. The library provides access to online, compact disk, and computer disk resources. Direct dial and Internet access are the two delivery mechanisms used for accessing information services online. CD-ROMs are leased or bought and mounted in-house. These CD-ROMs offer current information (one to three years is standard). Online services offer varying levels of coverage depending on the database. English is the primary language with some foreign language resources. Some sources are strictly bibliographic while others are full-text. Some include pictures and sound. The introduction of actual text-via-computer has delivered resources, especially in business, law, and health, that are more specialized than the library has been able to collect (e.g., medical newsletters, conference proceedings, codes, cases, directories, business reports, and international materials).

Implementation of a local area network (LAN) will offer multiple simultaneous uses of products (multiple copies), whereas, with paper products, the library does not generally buy duplicate copies.

Level of Collection Intensity

The intensity of collection building with electronic products is congruous with that of collection building with paper and other products. This congruity also applies to the U.S. Government Documents collection. This collection is developed within the criteria set for other collections; however, because of the library's selective depository status, expensive CD-ROM products are received that the library normally could not purchase.

Details of the Collections

English is the primary language with some foreign language resources included. Some are strictly bibliographic while others are full documents. Some include pictures and sound. Although some producers offer archival CD-ROM, the library does not acquire archival disks at this time, nor have we emphasized the replacement of paper indexes with electronic indexes just for the sake of changing formats. We have chosen to purchase those products that would allow cost-effective delivery within collection criteria, whether bibliographic, full-text, and/or multimedia. Major emphasis has been placed on quality products that would actually provide full-text or the potential of full-text.

Selection Criteria

The library has outlined four major criteria in choosing electronic products:

(1) Decisions must be formally presented to the collection management committee, who weighs all variables and who gives representation from major disciplines on campus. Decisions must be the result of a majority vote of the collection management committee, or ultimately come from the Dean.

(2) The products/services cannot be narrowly focused but must have several applications and/or be interdisciplinary and broad-based.

(3) Products/services with the potential of delivering full-text documents are given heavier weight.

(4) Products/services with the potential of delivery via the Internet are given heavier weight.

Additional criteria include the following:

(1) The products/services must be user friendly. In defining user friendly, the collection management committee looks for effective use of screen layouts, color, help functions, and browse functions. Also, movement through the database must be easy.

(2) The products/services may be judged by strengths and weaknesses discussed in professional reviews.

(3) The products/services, when appropriate, must offer keyword searching, including boolean capabilities.

(4) The products/services must meet criteria in written collection policies for the major subject areas.

(5) The products/services must offer effective technology orientation for students and faculty.

(6) Other factors in selection are cost, frequency of updates, supplier support, and LAN capabilities.

Collection Assessment

Collection assessment is the reviewing of the strengths and the weaknesses of a collection. Since electronic products can offer bibliographic or textual information defined as journal, monographic, and/or non-book materials, these products have in common some assessments with other collections but also differ in many ways. Listed below are some of the ways these products/services are assessed.

(1) Professional judgment of the subject specialists, based on first-hand experience.

(2) Reviews in professional literature.

(3) Consultation with other libraries.

(4) Users' comments.

(5) Comparisons of similar products, according to previously listed criteria.

(6) Checks of national guides & bibliographies.

(7) Results of statistical packages loaded on computers.

(8) Evaluation from professional researchers who are willing to undertake assessment of electronic information (campus research project).

Financial Support

Regardless of the format, whether CD-ROM, online, or otherwise computer-generated, there will always be a fluctuating cost for computer equipment and enhancements, above and beyond regular subscription costs. These costs should be built into the present serial budget.

A future budget consideration will be the replacement of micro-formatted materials (as they deteriorate and become obsolete) with that of computer-generated materials.

In conclusion, the university and its library has worked very hard the last few years to build a strong core collection of books, journals, and electronic resources. Once a strong base is in place, the university library at main campus must strive to support present graduate and proposed graduate programs on many campuses. The university's faculty, administration, and librarians must work closely together to provide life-long learning opportunities to its students, opportunities which will definitely involve electronic information.